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Diaspora tourism and the negotiation of belonging: Journeys of young second-generation Eritreans to Eritrea

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Abstract

In this article, I address the diaspora tourism of children of migrants. Based on a case study of second-generation Eritreans, I reveal how journeys to parents' home countries affect the sense of belonging of the second generation. Applying a translocal perspective, I understand diaspora tourism as a translocal phenomenon which is both based on and creates interconnectedness between individuals and places. I illustrate different locally grounded situations and the socio-spatial interconnectedness that second-generation Eritreans experience at various places in the course of their journey in Eritrea. I conclude that diaspora tourism and the associated experiences at the places visited represent crucial identity-establishing events for second-generation Eritreans and influence the negotiation of their belonging and positioning towards both Eritrea and the Eritrean diaspora. This paper contributes to the debate on second generation and belonging by focusing on how localities and socio-spatial interconnectedness affect the negotiation of second-generation Eritreans' belonging.

Keywords

Translocality; second generation; belonging; diaspora tourism; Eritrea, visiting friends and relatives

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Introduction

Although the majority of refugees in 2014 emanated from Syria and Afghanistan, Eritrea plays a prominent role in contemporary refugee and asylum debates. The UN estimates that more than 4,000 Eritreans left their country every month in 2012, and Eritrea today constitutes one of the largest source countries of refugees in both absolute and relative terms (UNHCR 2014, 29-33). Since the turn of the millennium, Eritreans have left their country due to 'intensified political repression and militarization' (Tecle & Goldring 2013, 194). Today, the compulsory and open-ended national service for both women and men constitutes the prime reason to flee the country (cf. Bozzini 2011b; Kibreab 2013). Although refugee flows from Eritrea date back to the 1960s, the reasons for fleeing differ greatly. Up to one million Eritreans found themselves forced to leave their country due to the struggle for independence between 1961 and 1991 (Hepner 2008, 477; HRW 2009, 12; Schmitz-Pranghe 2010, 5). Thus, the Eritrean diaspora consists largely of two generations of arrivals: the old generation that escaped from the struggle for independence and the new generation that flees from the authoritarian Eritrean state. The focus of this study is on the children of the old generation of arrivals, the second-generation Eritreans.

During the 30-year struggle for independence, Eritrean nationalism arose, entailing close relations between the diaspora and Eritrea. Through its transnational economic and political support, the Eritrean diaspora played a vital role in the independence struggle and the subsequent development of Eritrea (cf. Bernal 2006; Conrad 2006; Hepner 2003). Yet, this 'long-distance nationalism' (Anderson 1992) not only developed spontaneously among diaspora members but also was promoted or enforced by the Eritrean liberation fronts and is maintained to this day by the independent Eritrean state (Al-ali et al. 2001; Hepner 2008, 2009; Glatthard 2012). An example of such a transnational interlink was the annually held Bologna Festival[1] organized by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front EPFL. The festival was intended to foster the link between the exiles and their home, to promote Eritrean nationalism, enable the diaspora Eritreans to celebrate their culture and also to function as a kind of 'wedding market' amongst diaspora members (Andall 2002, 396-397; Arnone 2008, 332; Bozzini 2011a, 67; Conrad 2010, 54). The next generation of Eritreans that was born and grew up in this transnational context has generally developed a national consciousness (Zerat 2009, 67). Yet, today the dynamics of Eritrean nationalism and

identity are much more blurred, and new means exist, such as cyberspace, by which Eritreans may debate and revise 'the national narrative' (Bernal 2014, 3). Other opportunities for second-generation Eritreans to engage with their roots, their affinity to Eritrea, and their 'Eritrean-ness' are presented by journeys to Eritrea. A few studies have discussed journeys of Eritrean youths born and/or raised in the diaspora (cf. Arnone 2011; Conrad 2003, 2006, 2010; Tecle 2012). Their authors focus on how visiting Eritrea may influence 'Eritrean-ness' and identity and discuss the role of the Eritrean state and its attempts 'to institutionalize belonging among young Eritreans born and/or raised in the diaspora' (Tecle 2012, 44). A prominent example that combines the state's effort with visiting Eritrea is the Know-Your-Country-Tour *[Zura nHagerka]*. Conrad reveals how second-generation Eritreans who take the tour learn about their country of origin and its history (Conrad 2006, 2010). Further, both Conrad and Tecle depict 'intra-generational conflicts' (Tecle 2012, 44) between the second-generation Eritreans and their peers who live in Eritrea. Unequal treatment due to Eritrea's policy of graduated citizenship, which frees diaspora Eritreans of many of the citizenship duties that Eritreans in Eritrea have to fulfil, may fuel resentments against diaspora Eritreans (Riggan 2013, 87). Such experiences of being disapproved by Eritreans 'force them [the second-generation Eritreans] to re-negotiate their sense of belonging' (Conrad 2006, 5).

The aim of this paper is to uncover the 'socio-spatial interconnectedness' (Greiner & Sakdapolrak 2013) and experiences of diaspora tourism and to show how these may affect second-generation Eritreans' sense of belonging and home. Particular focus is laid on visiting local Eritrean as well as diaspora friends and relatives, a central aspect of the second-generation Eritreans' journeys that has received rather little attention. The central question is this: How do journeys to Eritrea influence second-generation Eritreans, and how do they affect their sense of belonging to Eritrea and their positioning within the translocal social field? Shedding light on the negotiation of belonging by second-generation Eritreans through journeys to Eritrea may contribute to the debate on their long-distance nationalism, their Eritrean identity, and their stance towards the Eritrean state.

Methodology

I draw my empirical material from participant observation (Spradley 1980, 53-62) and interviews. In the summer of 2014, I accompanied a handful of young diaspora-born

Eritrean women and men, all in their twenties, on a trip to Eritrea. The journey took 25 days and involved several family visits to various towns and villages as well as a trip to Massawa on the Red Sea coast to enjoy some holiday feeling. Besides experiencing one specific journey to Eritrea, I gained insights into the journeys of other second-generation Eritreans. During the trip, I noted my experiences, the talks and discussions I attended, and my observations as precisely as possible in a field diary (Spradley 1980, 69-72). As a result of this data collection strategy, my field notes mainly take the form of indirect speech in a rather descriptive manner. Additional data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and casual discussions with sixteen second-generation Eritreans born and/or raised in the diaspora[2]. The interviews were conducted between October 2013 and July 2015 in all parts of Switzerland. Discussions with various second-generation visitors in Eritrea and interviews in Switzerland provided additional data on journeys to Eritrea and served to contextualize the observations from the field trip. This ensured that the coverage of data and the findings reach beyond the journey I accompanied.

I adopted a purposeful sampling strategy for data collection in order to select information-rich cases that provide in-depth insight regarding the research question (cf. Patton 1990), namely journeys to Eritrea and family visits. Additionally to the group I accompanied, the sample includes ten women and six men, whom I selected through mutual social contacts, institutions, and other interviewees. Participants had to exhibit two characteristics: First, they had to be children of the old refugee generation that left Eritrea before the millennium because of the war. Since Eritreans who settled in Switzerland at that time are mainly ethnic Tigrinya (Glatthard 2012, 51), the majority of the participants are Tigrinya. Second, they might have been born in Eritrea, but they had to have grown up and undergone the major part of their socialization in the diaspora. Hence, I use the term *second generation* for individuals who are either born or principally raised in the diaspora[3]. In order to ensure the anonymity of all the research participants, I do not provide additional information on participants and interviews. Second-generation Eritreans in Switzerland are a rather small group, and individuals might easily become identifiable. Further, I use pseudonyms when quoting interviews or citing statements from the field trip.

Diaspora tourism: a socio-social practice in translocal space

This paper is intended to contribute to the broader debate on belonging in the post-migrant generation by applying a translocal perspective. Belonging involves 'the desire for some sort of attachment, be it to other people, places or modes of being' (Probyn 1996, 19). Thus, it has not only a social dimension but also a spatial one. According to Agnew, places are fixed or mobile locations that have a real material or imaginary form and further possess a 'sense of place', which is the emotional and subjective attachment individuals have to it (Cresswell 2004, 7). Thus, a sense of place may give rise to reflections and interpretations of rootedness and heritage and so provides attachments to certain locations. Places that affect humans' sense of belonging are those in which people feel comfortable or at home. Such places are found at various scales, such as the domestic, the local, the regional, the national, and even the supranational levels (Rose 1995, 88-91). These may be neighbourhoods, villages, regions, nation-states, or even larger entities. Direct personal interaction with these may bring about the negotiation of allegiances (Gustafson 2009, 492).

For migrants and their descendants, belonging depends on multiple places at multiple scales (Zontini 2015, 338). Diaspora tourism[4] provides an opportunity for individuals with migration backgrounds to directly experience the localities of their ancestral homes and so engage with their origin (cf. Basu 2004; Butler 2003; Coles & Timothy 2004; Newland & Taylor 2010; Williams & Hall 2000). Amongst various aspects, such journeys involve visits to friends and relatives. Several studies on identity and belonging of migrants' children depict diaspora tourism including visiting friends and relatives as important transnational practices by which individuals of the second generation maintain transnational ties. They also show that the journeys may both strengthen the attachment to ancestral home countries and foster feelings of difference and exclusion (cf. Reynolds 2010; Haller & Landolt 2005; Ruting 2012; Ali & Holden 2006; Wagner 2008). Visiting ancestral home countries and experiencing the transnational social field provokes reflections of one's personal biography and challenges second-generation individuals to examine who they are or where they belong (Ueda 2009, 148-152). Yet, King and Christou describe second-generation individuals expressing 'feelings of being at home' in a range of places that go beyond national borders (King & Christou 2010, 115). Hence, I take the view that journeys to the parental home country may be understood as a trans*local* practice.

Building on transnationalism, translocality reintegrates place to overcome the rather deterritorialized notion of transnationalism (Brickell & Datta 2011, 8-9). Like transnationalism, the concept draws attention to mobility and concomitant aspects, though 'without losing sight of the importance of localities in peoples' lives' (Oakes & Schein 2006, 1). Translocality thus focuses on the locally grounded experiences of individuals who find themselves living in different places. As experiences and practices are events that influence individuals' feelings about belonging (Anthias 2006, 21), translocal experiences such as encountering 'otherness' may produce opinions regarding attachments and affinities (Brickell & Datta 2011, 16). Journeys to one's heritage are not only motivated by 'a sense of belonging to or identifying with a way of life' (King 1994, 174) but also shape and form it anew. Hence, visiting friends and relatives represents a translocal activity through which the children of migrants may negotiate and frame their affinity to their ancestral home country. Translocality may thus be understood as the concept that explains how sense of place is socially constructed yet simultaneously incorporates the locations themselves.

Adopting a translocal lens to study how children of migrants constitute their sense of belonging by journeys to their parents' home countries reveals how socio-spatial interconnections affect negotiations of their belonging. By addressing the interconnectedness between localities and people at various levels, translocality serves as an appropriate conceptual tool to understand the negotiation of belonging in multi-place and multi-scale environments. It enables the exploration of how social aspects, places and the interconnection between the two affect the sense of belonging.

Second-generation Eritreans visiting Eritrea

Second-generation Eritreans have limited interactions with Eritrea (Zerat 2009, 67), so journeys to Eritrea present one way of engaging with their origins. However, travelling to Eritrea seems to be restricted to specific second-generation Eritreans. Glatthard points out that it is mainly those who are loyal to the regime who have the option of travelling to Eritrea (Glatthard 2012, 54). Alike, interviewees who have openly criticized the Eritrean regime stated that they can no longer obtain entry visas or fear possible consequences if travelling to Eritrea. However, my observations from the journey to Eritrea showed that many of the second-generation Eritreans travelling there would describe themselves as apolitical. Thus, only second-generation Eritreans who are known critics of the government do not travel to Eritrea.

The journey I accompanied started in Switzerland and took us via Italy to Eritrea. Even during the journey it became clear that this would be more than just an ordinary holiday trip for the second-generation Eritreans.

> At the airport in Rome Daniel stated that he would like to go on holidays after this. One of his fellow travellers replied: 'We're just going to holidays to Eritrea', but Daniel answered that this would not be real holidays, except perhaps the trip to Massawa, the town at the Red Sea Coast. He meant going somewhere he had never been to before, like two of the group members who would travel from Eritrea to Asia without returning to Switzerland first. (Field notes 2014)

That the journey is not associated with holidays but rather with visiting the ancestral home became apparent in a range of situations during the trip. The second-generation Eritreans, for instance, passed the passport controls either with their Swiss passport combined with their Eritrean identity card, the *tessera*, serving as visa, or with their Eritrean passport. Although they understand passports purely as a travel document not affecting their identity as Eritrean or Swiss, traveling without a visa to a country that requires visas for non-nationals emphasized to them their Eritrean nationality (Field notes 2014). Thus, it made them aware that they were traveling to a country to which they belong in some way.

The individual journeys of second-generation Eritreans in Eritrea do not merely follow a similar scheme; they usually also involve several identical activities, such as visiting friends and relatives or, if possible, spending some days at the Red Sea. Visiting friends and relatives in the Eritrean context is also specific because it is not limited to those living in Eritrea but also includes visiting diaspora Eritreans who have travelled to Eritrea themselves.

Visiting local Eritrean relatives

Visiting friends and relatives who live in Eritrea presents an important, unavoidable, and distinct part of all second-generation Eritreans' journeys, which may influence their sense of belonging and their affiliation to Eritrea. Although such journeys may be motivated by the desire to connect to the ancestral home 'through reviving relationships with family members' (Wagner 2008, 196), studies show that post-migrant generations may also feel obliged to visit relatives or family members who

have re-migrated to the ancestral country (Ali and Holden 2006, 237). Fieldwork revealed that the reality lies somewhere in between.

> As planning progressed, the group started discussing intensively when the best time was to visit their families. Someone emphasized that it is absolutely impossible to arrive and stay in Eritrea for several days or go to Massawa, without seeing one's family first. It would not only be rude; they would also be offended. Everybody agreed that families must be visited as soon as possible, and enough time must be factored in. 'It should not become some simple checking in', one of them said. (Field notes 2014)

> 'I was very often out of town and didn't stay in Asmara all the time. I would say that I spent at least half of my entire trip somewhere else, be it in Keren, Massawa, or the place where my family comes from. So I've been travelling a lot and I have to say I was absolutely into it. It's definitely somewhat exaggerated to put it like this, but it was more a kind of soul-searching for me than just going to Eritrea to hang around doing nothing and messing around. So for me, my trip of course was linked to a kind of longing. I wanted to see and experience things that had something to do with my family, my background, my origins. So in this way, it was not really a duty for me to go and visit my relatives. It was not a compulsory task at all. (…). To have to or not to have to… Well, of course it is a must to visit all of them. But I also really wanted to.' (Selam, interview 2014)

The second-generation Eritreans' motivation ranges from free will and the deliberate desire to grapple with their origins to a perceived social obligation and expectations. All participants described feeling some kind of social or at least familial expectation to visit relatives who live in Eritrea. Several interviewees believe that this is due to the rather distinct sense of community and family amongst Eritreans. In some cases, such as that of Idris, the pressure is even more explicit, since his parents sometimes ask him to visit his grandparents in Eritrea (Idris, interview 2014). The prospect of visiting relatives in Eritrea, however, may even discourage others from travelling. Several interviewees mentioned feeling uncomfortable about the idea or even being 'scared of the confrontation with the past and the reaction of local relatives' (Winta, interview 2014). However, those participants who travelled also felt an intrinsic motivation to visit locally resident Eritrean relatives and actively become involved with their origin. Kisanet stated that second-generation Eritreans often have an 'identity crisis', mostly during their adolescence, and travel to Eritrea on their quest for belonging (Kisanet, interview 2014). Visiting relatives who live in Eritrea thereby

presents an important aspect of this, as Selam's statement above demonstrates. Thus, regardless of the reasons for meeting locally resident families, visiting friends and relatives constitutes an important and unavoidable part of second-generation Eritreans' journeys. But how do they constitute socio-spatial experiences that affect deliberations about belonging and affiliation to Eritrea?

Even though the visitors often meet locally resident family members at the airport, at the hotel or occasionally on the streets of Asmara, visiting relatives entails that second-generation Eritreans visit the families in their homes. These places are often linked to feelings, memories, and emotions.

> 'Last time I was there… That's a very long time ago, I think I was 12. (…). I have pictures, so I know we've been to the countryside and visited some villages. But I have no memories of this at all. For me, the travels were my grandparents. It was just seeing and being with my grandparents. It was just feeling love and playing with them, you know. (…) So these things I still miss. For instance, when I talk to people and they say, "Well, this weekend I'm going to my grandparents". Just to have your family around you and to be grounded. Yeah… I really didn't have those simple moments because we didn't live there. And you saw that other people in Switzerland have those moments and you really wanted them as well. (…) For me, going back home was more to see family and my grandparents. Just being able to find a bit of your identity.' (Yohanna, interview 2014)

Like Yohanna, other interviewees told stories of weddings and other family gatherings that have stuck in their minds. Selam mentioned that it was in Eritrea that she could finally enjoy family gatherings, for example Easter celebrations (Selam, interview 2014). Both Yohanna and Selam stressed that experiencing family, which their Swiss friends were able to do at any time in Switzerland whereas they were not, made them realize that they are not completely 'at home' in Switzerland. Thus, experiencing the presence of family made several second-generation Eritreans aware of the absence of this opportunity in Switzerland and thereby created a sense of home when staying in Eritrea.

Approaching the towns or villages, the neighbourhoods, and finally the relatives' homes often brought back nostalgic feelings and childhood memories. Zerai and Daniel, for instance, greeted locals they knew from previous visits and introduced them to me as 'our neighbours', pointed to places and recalled memories such as 'we always used to play football over there when we were boys,' and explained how

things used to be in the earlier days and how they have changed (Field notes 2014). Some second-generation Eritreans mentioned that a conspicuous change in the neighbourhoods was the lack of local peers, as many of them have left the country. Thus, when approaching the families' homes, the visitors normally behaved as if they were entering familiar surroundings.

> We visited Awet's grandmother in a rural area where she lives. On the way, Awet mentioned that it was many years since his last visit. (…) Arriving in the village he asked a young local boy to show us the way to his grandmother's house. Finally reaching her house, he proclaimed: 'This is where I live'.
> (…).
> [On another family visit], he stated 'Good fortune seems to be with me. This could have happened to me. I could have been grown up here' when walking through the neighbourhood towards his relatives' home (Field notes 2014).

Despite Awet's being born, raised and integrated in Switzerland, it seemed that seeing his grandmother's house evoked a certain feeling of home. In addition, his statement at the other neighbourhood, which appeared to be less appealing to him, shows that experiencing the neighbourhood made him aware of his origin and that he belongs to it to some extent. Hence, experiencing the presence of family members attaches feelings and emotions to certain places, and so provides the particular locations with a sense of place that evokes a sense of belonging when staying in Eritrea.

The visits normally follow a similar pattern. In general, everybody seems to be excited and celebrates the visit with lots of food and drinks. All of the second-generation Eritreans who took me to their families said that they felt odd when relatives made a big thing of their visit. Further, they felt uncomfortable being served and eating the relatives' food or awkward not knowing what to talk about at their first visits.

> 'You know, my cousin [a local Eritrean whom we met the very first day] did not accompany me when I went to my uncle's place. So I had to go there by myself. I was feeling rather uncomfortable, since I didn't know what to talk about. I hadn't met this family for a very long time. However, after some small talk it was ok and everything went well', Awet told me after he returned from his first visit. (Field note 2014)

Yet, after some small talk they appeared to lose their initial discomfort. They started to help with daily tasks or playing with the children and so became less a guest and more a visiting family member. The family visits showed that the older relatives in particular seemed to be delighted to see that the second-generation had not forgotten about their families and their roots.

> While the grandmother was celebrating the coffee ceremony, she held a monolog in Tigrinya addressed to all of them. (…). One of the second-generation Eritreans gave a summary translation: She was 'very happy to see all of them coming back to Eritrea', that they 'did not forget their roots,' and that they came back to 'visit the country from which they originate'. To me, it seemed that she intended to praise the arrival of the second-generation Eritreans with her words. The second-generation Eritreans then replied with a simple 'Amen'. They explained that this answer implies more or less: 'Nicely said, there is nothing much more to add'. (Field notes 2014)

At the families' houses, second-generation Eritreans also encounter objects such as family pictures or martyrs' certificates[5], which hang in almost every Eritrean living room. These seemed to provoke little direct reaction, as they were only explained to me on two visits. Yet they elicit thoughts both about one's genealogy and sometimes on the country's history. Zerai stated that he identifies with Eritrea, a country he has never lived in, rather strongly, because relatives had given their lives for the future generation. This somehow makes him part of that context and belonging to it (Zerai, interview 2014). Thus, the second-generation Eritreans encounter situations, discussions, and a variety of objects through family visits to these localities that may provoke deliberations about roots and their relation to Eritrea and convey a sense of belonging.

Over the course of the stay, relations between local family members and the second-generation Eritreans intensify, and discussions become more personal. In this way, second-generation Eritreans become aware of the difficult local living conditions and the struggles and worries of their local relatives. At the family visits I attended, the current situation in Eritrea and emigration from Eritrea were recurring topics of conversation.

> At lunch they talked openly about the youth leaving the country. It was explained to me that a local relative thought it understandable in some respects. People in Eritrea have to

> do jobs which they neither want to do nor enjoy and only earn about 500 Nakfa[6]. Therefore the youth think about leaving Eritrea. (Field notes 2014)

Two participants further mentioned having stayed with their local relatives for a period and taking part in everyday activities such as daily chores and queuing for fuel or commodities. Being confronted with the realities faced by relatives who live in Eritrea appears to affect the second-generation Eritreans emotionally. As a result, the second-generation Eritreans start to empathize with their relatives and normally feel a need to give some money to them. They do not intend to play the role of benefactor, but they feel obliged to because of the discrepancy they witness between their own living conditions and those of local Eritreans (Selam, interview 2014). Thus, learning about the realities faced by local relatives through discussions or by participating in everyday activities increases empathy for their relatives, strengthens second-generation Eritreans' affiliation to them, and so conveys a feeling of belonging. However, it also makes second-generation Eritreans realize and reflect on their strangeness.

In conclusion, family visits become a core issue in the negotiation of their attachment to Eritrea. Experiencing family attaches emotions, feelings, memories, and relationships to the particular localities and so provides localities with a sense of place. These places may, for instance, be family homes, immediate surrounding and neighbourhoods, or villages and towns. Thus, the interrelation between family and place creates a sense of place that makes second-generation Eritreans feel belonging to those particular places and makes them feel Eritrean. Further, personal interactions with local relatives and experiencing the realities faced by the local relatives create empathy and a sense of belonging. At the same time, experiencing the places and the local living conditions recalls to them that they do not fully belong to Eritrea but also have another home. Thus, visiting families and relatives simultaneously makes second-generation Eritreans aware of their affinity to Eritrea and to their countries of residence.

Meeting diaspora relatives and friends

In the Eritrean context, visiting friends and relatives involves an additional aspect. Besides meeting locally resident family members, the visitors also meet with their relatives and friends from abroad.

> 'We also have relatives in the United States. And when I went to Eritrea for the first time, they happened to be there too. So I was able to organize everything before leaving. And when I arrived at the airport, I saw my cousin for the very first time in my life, as she lives in the US. So instead of flying to New York during the holidays, which I could have done, we met in Asmara.' (Selam, interview 2014)

In contrast to visiting people who are living in Eritrea, which is mainly limited to relatives, meeting with Eritreans from abroad also involves friends and acquaintances who they know from their country of residence or from meetings and events. Opportunities to meet occur at festivals such as the National Youth Festival in Sawa, the military training camp, and the Festival Eritrea in Asmara that replaced the Bologna Festival after independence (Conrad 2010, 66; Radtke 2009, 158; Tesfamichael 2010, 31)[7], which second-generation Eritreans sometimes attend in the course of their journey. Several interviewees stressed that the earlier Bologna Festival evoked attachments to Eritrea and the Eritrean diaspora.

> 'The Bologna Festival was something very special. I enjoyed it very much. And I also felt comfortable there. (…) Sure, I missed it when it ended. That feeling of belonging. It was this small subculture. There were Eritreans from Italy, Germany, and England, none of them fully Eritrean or European. Some knew how to speak Tigrinya. Others like me were less proficient. Oh, it was great. That was something we missed. You have common past and similar experiences.' (Kisanet, interview 2014)

Since independence they are also able to experience such feelings directly in Eritrea. Tarik remembers that 'the first time the festival took place in Eritrea, was like it used to be in Bologna – only way larger and even more enormous and intense' (Tarik, interview 2014). Both interviews and observations showed that actual encounters with friends and relatives from abroad in Eritrea influences the second-generation Eritreans' sense of belonging.

> 'The first trip to Eritrea was just great. What I remember best is that there were lots of people from the States. They didn't speak Tigrinya, even though they were of Tigrinya origin. So I realized that I was not a misfit or outsider for not speaking Tigrinya either. And it was really exciting, because all these people were my age and looked and talked like me, listened to the same music I did. (…) It was the first time I realized that there are many different places with a kind of "Eritrean mini-colony". In Washington, in LA,

> all over the place. Living the kind of life we did. Far away from Eritrea, but still somehow connected.' (Selam, interview 2014)

Even though Selam not only refers to diaspora friends and relatives but also to strangers, this statement shows that such interactions may raise awareness of similarities with other diaspora Eritreans. Meeting friends and relatives from abroad who share similar values, attitudes, and ideas may create a feeling of being part of the same group and may make second-generation Eritreans aware of their 'subgroup or subculture' (Kisanet, interview 2014). The interaction with other second-generation Eritreans in particular demonstrates that there are other individuals with similar lifestyles who face similar issues and experiences. Several interviewees stressed that meeting other second-generation Eritreans from all over the globe made them realize that they belong to this 'subgroup' of foreign-born and/or -raised Eritreans – or at least to a part of it, since they also recognize differences amongst the heterogeneous group of second-generation Eritreans.

Besides meetings that are arranged in advance or at festivals, visiting diaspora Eritreans tends to take place rather randomly at locations where they spend their leisure time. One reason is that the journeys of diaspora Eritreans generally seem to follow similar patterns, and they therefore sojourn at the same places. Over the course of our journey, we often met friends and relatives from abroad on the streets of Asmara, at hotels and restaurants, and at the Red Sea Coast. In addition, second-generation Eritreans also keep an active lookout for their peers from abroad. Attending a discussion about where to meet other young diaspora Eritreans revealed that nightclubs were one of the best places to do so. Most second-generation Eritreans prefer clubs where there are more diaspora Eritreans than *Asmarinos*, the local people from Asmara. They believe that they have more in common with diaspora peers, such as preferring the same western music or sharing common values and interests, whereas locals would be quite different (Field notes 2014). Further, several interviewees mentioned that some second-generation Eritreans hoped to find a partner at such places. Yet Daniel qualified this by saying that it would be more about just 'having fun', since any potential relationships would be unlikely to last due to the geographical distances involved (Field notes 2014). A famous place to meet other young diaspora Eritreans is the steps in front of St. Joseph's Cathedral on Asmara's main road, *Godena Harnet* (Tecle 2012, 49). Yet I found it largely abandoned in 2014.

One likely reason might be that we had arrived rather late in the season, at the beginning of August, and so most visitors from the diaspora would already have left Eritrea. However, the very absence of the diaspora from Eritrea in summer 2014 was a regular topic of conversation among the second-generation Eritreans I accompanied. They repeatedly mentioned the general absence of both locally resident and diaspora Eritreans and that the streets were more deserted than on their previous visits. Reflecting upon reasons for the diaspora's absence, Zerai argued that diaspora Eritreans, and especially second-generation Eritreans, were probably just tired of the entire situation and therefore avoided travelling to Eritrea (Field notes 2014). Interviewees also mentioned that blackouts and fuel shortages have increased and that the infrastructure has worsened, and Tarik stressed that it made him 'sad to see the stagnation or decline that has gone on for several years' (Tarik, interview 2014). Further, the difficult living conditions would be another reason for the absence and emigration of many local Eritreans, interviewees stated. As a result, some interviewees claimed that the government was responsible for this situation, others emphasized its efforts and expressed the need to contribute personally to Eritrea's development, and still others even did both. Thus, experiencing the absence of diaspora Eritreans from places where they normally expected to meet them, makes second-generation Eritreans aware of local realities and entails reflections about Eritrea and their stance towards Eritrea.

Like visiting locally resident families, meeting friends and relatives from abroad is linked with places too. As illustrated, various places are known as locations where young second-generation Eritreans may meet their diaspora peers. The interconnection of localities and people reveals that not only the presence but also the absence of certain groups from places where they normally are found affects second-generation Eritreans regarding the negotiation of their attachment to Eritrea and the Eritrean diaspora.

Conclusion

This paper explores journeys of second-generation Eritreans to their ancestral home country with a specific focus on visiting friends and relatives. Applying a translocal perspective enables an examination of how second-generation Eritreans experience different localities and how socio-spatial interrelations and the experiences of these at specific places then influence the second-generation Eritreans' sense of belonging.

Diaspora tourism and visiting friends and relatives constitute socio-spatial and translocal experiences, which both are based on and create interconnectedness, interactions, and exchanges between individuals and places. These socio-spatial experiences influence the second-generation Eritreans' negotiation of belonging.

Narratives and observations during the field trip and interview statements illustrate how second-generation Eritreans perceive and interpret their journeys and how they experience these socio-spatial interactions themselves. The study shows that different specific localities are linked to specific people. Experiencing these socio-spatial interconnections provokes feelings or memories and so affects second-generation Eritreans' sense of belonging in differing ways. On the one hand, localities are linked to locally resident relatives. Family homes, neighbourhoods, and even Eritrea, on a more abstract level, constitute such places. They are directly connected to experiences and social contacts, such as visiting grandparents, family gatherings or childhood experiences which second-generation Eritreans, unlike peers without migration backgrounds, lack in their countries of residence. This socio-spatial interconnectedness generally promotes a feeling of 'being at home' and so raises awareness of Eritrean origin and a sense of belonging to Eritrea. On the other hand, locations are related to the diaspora. Coles and Timothy (2004, 13) argue that diaspora tourism plays a key role in the construction of a diaspora identity, and Conrad claims 'that the journeys to Eritrea make most youngsters aware that something like an Eritrean "exile" or "diaspora culture" in its own right exists at all' (Conrad 2010, 100). In this line, I found that one of the essential aspects for second-generation Eritreans in this process is encountering the diaspora, which is also related to space. As shown, there are various localities, such as nightclubs, hotels, and public places, at which second-generation Eritreans encounter diaspora peers and identify the Eritrean diaspora, or at least part of it, as an additional frame of reference for negotiating their belonging. In sum, this study indicates that it is neither merely locality nor society but rather the relation of the two that provokes negotiations of belonging. It is the interconnectedness between place and people experienced in the course of journeys to Eritrea that shapes second-generation Eritreans' affiliation to Eritrea and its diaspora. Yet, even though these socio-spatial experiences raise awareness of belonging, it is important to note that they promote consciousness of otherness or strangeness at the same time. In the case of second-generation Eritreans,

this is not solely restricted to their attachment to their ancestral home but also to their belonging to the Eritrean diaspora.

In this paper, I have argued that diaspora tourism and concomitant visits to friends and families constitute a translocal phenomenon in which individuals with migration backgrounds constitute and maintain their affiliation to different locations and negotiate aspects of their belonging. Incorporating a translocality perspective, however, does not imply any denial of the *national* or a sense of belonging towards a country. Moreover, the results indicate that belonging on a larger scale like belonging to a nation may base on the actual experience of respectively the engagement with specific locations and their socio-spatial interrelations.

Notes

1 Scientific literature provides scant explanation why Bologna was chosen for this festival (cf. Arnone 2014). According to a statement published on the website 'Eritrea Live', it was thanks to the prominent communist movement in Bologna, which welcomed and supported Eritreans in their struggle (Plaut 2014).

2 All participants but one live in Switzerland, yet eight grew up in other non-African countries with large Eritrean diasporas. Further, three are children of binational parents. With the exception of the interview with Yohanna, all data were collected in German. Thus, field notes and interviews were recorded in German and translated into English.

3 Since this sample also incorporates people born in Eritrea, strictly speaking the term 'second-generation' is incorrect. There are several subcategories for classifying children of migrants: 1.75 generation (migrated at the age of 0-5), the 1.5 generation (migrated at the age of 6-12) and the 1.25 generation (migrated at the age of 13-17) (cf. Andall 2002, 390-392). However, since all of my interviewees except one belong at least to the 1.75 generation, meaning that they left Eritrea before the age of six, I decided to speak of the 'second-generation'.

4 Various terminologies such as 'diaspora tourism', 'ethnic tourism', 'heritage tourism', 'roots tourism', and others exist for describing the journeys of post-migrant generations to their ancestral homeland. For this study on second-generation Eritreans, 'diaspora tourism' seems to be most suitable, since 'roots tourism' typically involves more distant generations (Ruting 2012, 18), 'ethnic tourism' more frequently describes travel in search of the 'exotic' or strange and indigenous cultures (King 1994, 173), and 'heritage tourism' seems to centres on historical aspects and the desire to consume culture (Chhabra et al. 2003, 702-703). Another conceptual framework that links tourism and migration is 'visiting friends and relatives (VFR tourism)' (Williams & Hall 2000, 20). Yet, as diaspora tourism 'may combine visits to friends and family with conventional tourist or leisure activities' (Newland & Taylor 2010, 6), I treat visiting friends and relatives as an integral part of diaspora tourism.

5 Martyrs' certificates are documents issued to honor the war victims and are therefore a reminder of those who sacrificed themselves for Eritrean independence.

6 At the time of visiting Eritrea, the government exchange rate of is around 1 US Dollar to 15 Nakfa. However, the black-market exchange rates, which reflect the actual value more accurately (Riggan 2014, 103), were slightly above 50 Nakfa to the dollar.

7 The Bologna Festival is no longer held, apart from a 40th-anniversary edition in July 2014. Yet, various other festival or events have been organized, for instance in Frankfurt (Nolting von 2002, 42-43). Fenan, who occasionally attends the festival in Frankfurt, mentioned that he still met people he had known since childhood or from the Bologna Festival (Fenan, interview 2014).

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